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E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: PINR, PNAT, PTER, KPAL, IS, JO, EG
SUBJECT: FUNDAMENTALISM AND THE INTIFADA:
DEFINING THE ISSUES

REFS: A) STATE 303639, B) JERUSALEM 3004

1. [REDACTED]

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

2. ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM IS POSING AN
INCREASING CHALLENGE TO SECULAR NATIONALIST
PALESTINIAN ORGANIZATIONS ON THE WEST BANK.
RECENT WEEKS HAVE SEEN DIRECT CHALLENGES BY THE
MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD-CREATED GROUP "HAMAS" TO THE
PLO/UNIFIED NATIONAL LEADERSHIP OF THE UPRISING
(UNLU) WHICH CURRENTLY LEADS THE UPRISING. THIS

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CHALLENGE, WHICH HAS MET WITH MIXED SUCCESS, HAS
TAKEN THE FORM OF LEAFLETS CRITICAL OF UNLU AND
THE PLO, ATTEMPTS TO IMPOSE ALTERNATIVE STRIKE
DAYS, AND EVEN CLASHES IN CERTAIN LOCALITIES.
THUS FAR, HAMAS HAS DEMONSTRATED STRENGTH IN

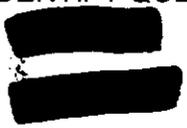
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THOSE AREAS WHERE EXISTING ISLAMIC INSTITUTIONS HAVE WIDESPREAD POPULAR SUPPORT: NABLUS AND THE NORTHERN WEST BANK, WHERE IT SEEMS TO BE BEST ORGANIZED; THE RAMALLAH-EL BIREH AREA; AND HEBRON. ITS ATTEMPTS TO MAKE INROADS INTO THE CHRISTIAN ENCLAVE OF BETHLEHEM-BEIT JALA-BEIT SAHOUR HAVE BEEN RESISTED BY LOCAL RESIDENTS. HAMAS REMAINS WEAK IN COSMOPOLITAN EAST JERUSALEM. WHATEVER THE CURRENT ACTUAL STRENGTH OF HAMAS--AND ESTIMATES VARY WIDELY--IT HAS SUCCEEDED IN BECOMING A FACTOR TO BE RECKONED WITH IN CONSIDERING THE FUTURE OF THE INTIFADA ON THE WEST BANK.

3. HAMAS IS NOT THE ONLY MUSLIM FUNDAMENTALIST GROUP FUNCTIONING ON THE WEST BANK. THE FATAH-AFFILIATED "ISLAMIC JIHAD"--NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH THE SHIITE GROUP OF THE SAME NAME FOUND IN LEBANON AND ELSEWHERE--WAS CRIPPLED BY THE KILLING OF THREE SENIOR LEADERS IN CYPRUS. IT HAS NOT RECOVERED TO ESTABLISH ITSELF AS AN INDEPENDENT PLAYER IN THE STRUGGLE FOR THE HEARTS AND MINDS OF WEST BANK PALESTINIANS. OTHER SMALL, SHADOWY GROUPS ALSO RISE AND FALL, CREATING LITTLE MORE THAN A RIPPLE.

4. THIS REPORT IS ONLY A PRELIMINARY ATTEMPT TO IDENTIFY QUESTIONS FOR FUTURE STUDY. ISLAMIC


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FUNDAMENTALIST GROUPS ARE EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TO PENETRATE; UNDERSTANDING THEIR INTERNAL STRUCTURES AND EXTERNAL GOALS WILL TAKE MUCH TIME AND PATIENCE. THIS IS A FIRST PASS AT THE SUBJECT ON THE WEST BANK, BASED TO A LARGE EXTENT ON CONTACTS FROM JERUSALEM AND THE NORTHERN WEST BANK CITY OF NABLUS. WE HAVE LESS COMPLETE INFORMATION ON THE SITUATION IN THE SOUTHERN WEST BANK. GAZA HAS ITS OWN PATTERN OF ISLAMIC POLITICS. WE WOULD WELCOME INFORMATION FROM CAIRO AND AMMAN ON EGYPTIAN AND JORDANIAN ISLAMIC POLITICAL TIES WITH THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES. END SUMMARY AND INTRODUCTION.

HAMAS--BACKGROUND AND HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

5. HAMAS IS A CREATION OF THE MUSLIM

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BROTHERHOOD (MB), WITH TIES TO THE MB THROUGHOUT THE ISLAMIC WORLD. THE NAME "HAMAS" WAS APPARENTLY CHOSEN IN FEBRUARY 1988, BUT NOT USED EXTENSIVELY UNTIL MAY. AN ACRONYM FOR "ISLAMIC RESISTANCE MOVEMENT," THE WORD ITSELF IS ARABIC FOR "ZEALOTS."

6. ALTHOUGH PALESTINIANS IN CERTAIN PARTS OF THE WEST BANK HAVE STRONG ISLAMIC CONVICTIONS, THEY TEND TO EXPRESS THEMSELVES POLITICALLY IN SECULAR TERMS. ISLAM HAS, HOWEVER, PLAYED A ROLE IN WEST BANK POLITICS SINCE THE LATE 1940S, WHEN THE MB FIRST CAME TO THE WEST BANK. THE MB WAS SHORTLY AFTER DISCREDITED IN THE EYES OF

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SUBJECT: FUNDAMENTALISM AND THE INTIFADA:

PALESTINIANS BY ITS SUPPORT FOR KING HUSSEIN IN HIS POWER STRUGGLE AGAINST PM NABULSI IN THE MID-50S. DURING JORDANIAN RULE, IT WAS TIGHTLY MONITORED BY JORDANIAN INTELLIGENCE AND DID NOT GAIN SIGNIFICANT INFLUENCE UNTIL THE MID- TO LATE-70S, PARTICULARLY IN THE NORTHERN WEST BANK.

7. IN 1976, MO SUPPORTERS ATTACKED AND BURNED A NABLUS THEATER SHOWING AN "IMMODEST" PLAY. THIS IS OFTEN CONSIDERED THE BEGINNING OF THE MB'S EMERGENCE AS A VIABLE POLITICAL FORCE IN THE NORTHERN WEST BANK. ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISTS BUILT A POWER BASE IN AN-NAJAH UNIVERSITY, WHERE THEY GAINED CONTROL OF THE STUDENT COUNCIL IN 1978. THIS SURGE IN POPULARITY WAS PROBABLY DUE

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TO A NUMBER OF FACTORS: 1) THE RISE OF KHOMEINISM IN IRAN, WHICH GAVE FUNDAMENTALISM A BOOST THROUGHOUT THE MUSLIM WORLD; 2) THE DISCREDITING OF TRADITIONAL ARAB LEADERS IN THE WAKE OF SADAT'S TRIP TO JERUSALEM; 3) A LARGE INFLOW OF MONEY FROM THE MB IN JORDAN AND EGYPT; AND 4) THE DENIAL BY FUNDAMENTALISTS THAT THEY BELONGED TO THE FORMERLY DISCREDITED MB-- INSTEAD, THEY CALLED THEMSELVES THE "INDEPENDENT ISLAMIC BLOC."

8. SUPPORT FOR THE FUNDAMENTALISTS AT AN-NAJAH, AS ELSEWHERE IN THE WEST BANK, HAS EBBED AND FLOWED ACCORDING TO THE PLO'S FORTUNES AND THE STATUS OF FUNDAMENTALISM IN THE MUSLIM WORLD. SECULAR LEADERS IN THE NORTHERN WEST BANK, AIDED BY PLO MONEY, WORKED TO CONTAIN THE FUNDAMENTALISTS AND REDUCE THEIR INFLUENCE IN AN-NAJAH UNIVERSITY. THE FUNDAMENTALISTS LOST CREDIBILITY, FOR EXAMPLE, WHEN THE PLO BORE THE BRUNT OF THE FIGHTING DURING THE 1982 INVASION OF LEBANON AND DURING THE PERIOD OF ARAFAT-HUSSEIN RECONCILIATION. THEY HAVE GAINED STRENGTH WHEN THE PLO APPEARED WEAK AND DIVIDED.

9. BY THE END OF 1987, FUNDAMENTALISTS AND NATIONALISTS IN THE NORTHERN WEST BANK HAD

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ACHIEVED AN UNEASY STATUS QUO MARKED BY OCCASIONAL VIOLENT CLASHES. IN NABLUS THE FUNDAMENTALISTS TENDED TO BE RESENTED BY THE SECULAR COMMUNITY, BUT ALSO FEARED.

10. WHEN THE INTIFADA BEGAN, THE MB ACTED DECISIVELY TO SEIZE A ROLE. SEVERAL FACTORS

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CONTRIBUTED TO THE MB DECISION TO INVOLVE ITSELF FOR SEVERAL REASONS. ISLAMIC JIHAD HAD WON CONSIDERABLE PRESTIGE FOR ITS ROLE IN GAZA, AND THE MB FEARED LOSING SUPPORT AND CREDIBILITY IN THE FUNDAMENTALIST COMMUNITY. INDIVIDUAL MB MEMBERS WANTED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE INTIFADA; THE MB LEADERSHIP FEARED THAT IF MEMBERS COULD NOT USE THE MB AS A VEHICLE FOR PARTICIPATION, THEY WOULD TURN TO OTHER FUNDAMENTALIST OR NATIONALIST ORGANIZATIONS. MB LEADERS BELIEVED, THEN AS NOW, THAT THE INTIFADA WILL BE CARRIED TO A CONCLUSION. THEY WANTED A SAY IN THAT FINAL SETTLEMENT. FINALLY, THE MB HAD A READY-MADE ORGANIZATION PRESENT IN THE WEST BANK. ACCORDINGLY, THE MB CREATED HAMAS IN FEBRUARY 1988 AND BEGAN ITS PARTICIPATION IN THE UPRISING.

HAMAS--STRUCTURE

11. THE MB HAS ITS HEADQUARTERS IN CAIRO, WITH A BRANCH IN AMMAN. SUB-BRANCHES ARE PRESENT IN THE WEST BANK (NABLUS) AND GAZA. THE HEAD OF THE MB IN THE WEST BANK REPORTEDLY IS NABIL BUSHTAWI, OF NABLUS. OTHER KEY WEST-BANK FIGURES FROM NABLUS ARE SHEIKH SAID BILAL AND HAMID BITAWI.

12. THE RELATION BETWEEN CAIRO, AMMAN, THE WEST BANK, AND GAZA REMAINS UNCLEAR, AS IS THE RELATION BETWEEN THE NABLUS LEADERSHIP AND OTHER

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E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
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SUBJECT: FUNDAMENTALISM AND THE INTIFADA:

AREAS OF THE WEST BANK. THERE ARE STRONG LINKS WITH CAIRO AND AMMAN, AND SOME MB LEADERS MAY HOLD POSITIONS IN JORDANIAN INTELLIGENCE. APPARENTLY, KY DECISIONS ARE MADE IN CAIRO AND AMMAN, BUT LOCAL UNITS RETAIN CONSIDERABLE INDEPENDENCE OF ACTION. MONEY FLOWS IN FROM CAIRO AND AMMAN, AS WELL AS BEING RAISED LOCALLY THROUGH THE MOSQUES.

13. THE MB IN NABLUS REPORTEDLY CONSISTS OF APPROXIMATELY 150 MEMBERS HEADED BY A 4 OR 5 MAN COMMITTEE. THE LEADERSHIP CONSISTS OF MUSLIM SHEIKHS, UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS AT AN-NAJAH AND BIR ZEIT UNIVERSITIES, INSTRUCTORS AT THE KULLIYET AL-DAWA (AN ISLAMIC COLLEGE AFFILIATED
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WITH JERUSALEM UNIVERSITY, LOCATED IN BEIT HANINA, NORTH JERUSALEM), EMPLOYEES OF THE ISLAMIC WAQF, A SHARIA JUDGE, AND VARIOUS MERCHANTS. THE "FOOT SOLDIERS" OF HAMAS/MB IN NABLUS CONSIST OF DISADVANTAGED YOUTHS FROM THE POORER SECTIONS OF THE OLD TOWN (CASBAH). THIS NETWORK SEEMS TO BE STABLE--FEW ARRESTS, FEW DEFECTIONS, FEW NEW CONVERTS.

14. THE LEADERSHIP MAKES USE OF THE MOSQUES TO PLAN, PROSELYTIZE, INSTRUCT, AND RAISE MONEY. THIS IS A MAJOR ADVANTAGE HAMAS POSSESSES OVER THE UNLU, SINCE MANY ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS UNIVERSITIES, CHARITIES, AND PROFESSIONAL SOCIETIES THROUGH WHICH THE UNLU COULD OPERATE HAVE BEEN CLOSED BY ISRAELI AUTHORITIES.

HAMAS--METHOD OF OPERATION

15. ACTIVITIES ARE CARRIED OUT BY TIGHTLY KNIT CELLS OF AS FEW AS FIVE MEMBERS. OUTSIDERS RARELY PARTICIPATE IN HAMAS ACTIONS, A FUNDAMENTAL DIFFERENCE FROM INTIFADA ACTIVITIES IN GENERAL, WHICH DERIVE CONSIDERABLE STRENGTH FROM THE SPONTANEOUS PARTICIPATION OF LARGE NUMBERS OF PALESTINIANS. HAMAS ALSO SEEKS MAXIMUM PUBLICITY FOR ITS ACTS. BEFORE A STRIKE, FOR EXAMPLE, RED SPRAY-PAINTED INSTRUCTIONS--BOLDLY SIGNED "HAMAS"--ARE IN EVIDENCE THROUGHOUT AREAS OF HAMAS INFLUENCE. AS A RESULT OF ITS PENCHANT FOR TIGHT CONTROL AND PUBLICITY, HAMAS TENDS NOT TO COOPERATE IN

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UNLU-ORGANIZED ACTIONS. IN NABLUS, FOR EXAMPLE, HAMAS HAS REFUSED TO PARTICIPATE IN IMPROMPTU BLOOD DRIVES ORGANIZED ON SHORT NOTICE BY POPULAR COMMITTEES TO TREAT WOUNDED PALESTINIANS.

16. HAMAS USES DIFFERENT METHODS TO ENFORCE ITS STRIKE CALLS, DEPENDING ON ITS STRENGTH IN THE TOWN INVOLVED. IN RAMALLAH AND THE BEIT HANINA

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NEIGHBORHOOD OF NORTH JERUSALEM, FOR EXAMPLE, HAMAS FOLLOWERS REPORTEDLY WERE ON THE SCENE TO ENFORCE THE SEPTEMBER 9 STRIKE. ALTHOUGH NO CLASHES WERE REPORTED IN THESE AREAS, THERE HAVE BEEN CONFRONTATIONS WITH UNLU SUPPORTERS ON PRIOR OCCASIONS. NO CLASHES WERE REPORTED IN NABLUS, APPARENTLY BECAUSE THE UNLU CHOSE NOT TO TEST HAMAS' STRENGTH. IN THE PAST, HOWEVER, HAMAS HAS FIREBOMBED CHRISTIAN SHOPS THAT SOLD LIQUOR OR OTHERWISE DEFIED ITS ORDERS. IN BETHLEHEM, TIRES WERE BURNED AND THERE WERE CONFRONTATIONS BETWEEN HAMAS AND UNLU SUPPORTERS ON THE OCCASION OF THE SEPTEMBER 9 STRIKE. SOME SHOPS WERE INTIMIDATED INTO CLOSING EARLY. HOWEVER, MOST STAYED OPEN. IN JERUSALEM, HAMAS WAS NOT IN EVIDENCE, AND THE STIKE CALL WAS LARGELY IGNORED.

HAMAS--RELATIVE REGIONAL STRENGTH

17. HAMAS APPEARS TO BE STRONGEST IN GAZA. IN THE WEST BANK, IT SEEMS TO BE BASED IN THE TOWNS, PARTICULARLY THOSE WHERE THE INHABITANTS ARE RELATIVELY HOMOGENEOUS AND HAVE A RELIGIOUS

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BENT. ITS PRIMARY WEST BANK STRONGHOLDS, IN DESCENDING ORDER OF INFLUENCE, APPEAR TO BE NABLUS, RAMALLAH, AND HEBRON. HAMAS IS PRESENT IN JERUSALEM, PARTICULARLY THE BEIT HANINA NEIGHBORHOOD IN NORTH JERUSALEM NEAR RAMALLAH. IN DOWNTOWN EAST JERUSALEM AND THE OLD CITY, HAMAS IS PRESENT BUT WEAK, PROBABLY BECAUSE OF THE COSMOPOLITAN CHARACTER OF THESE AREAS. HAMAS IS TRYING TO INCREASE ITS FOOTHOLD IN THE CHRISTIAN AREA OF BETHLEHEM-BEIT JALA-BEIT SAHOUR, THOUGH THUS FAR ITS INTIMIDATION TACTICS HAVE NOT PROVED SUCCESSFUL. (IN FACT, HAMAS ACTIONS IN THESE CHRISTIAN AREAS HAVE LED TO THE REAPPEARANCE OF HAMAM, THE "CHRISTIAN" RESISTANCE MOVEMENT, WHOSE ACRONYM FORMS THE

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ARABIC WORD FOR "DOVE.") WE DO NOT YET HAVE A GOOD FEEL FOR HAMAS IN HEBRON, THOUGH WE KNOW IT HAS BEEN ACTIVE. THE AUGUST 21 AND SEPTEMBER 9 STRIKE CALLS WERE OBSERVED THERE. IN ADDITION, ITS INHABITANTS ARE KNOWN TO HAVE STRONG RELIGIOUS CONVICTIONS. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT HERE AS ELSEWHERE MUCH OF HAMAS' STRENGTH DERIVES FROM THE POPULATION'S TRADITIONAL SUPPORT FOR ISLAMIC INSTITUTIONS, RATHER THAN FROM A CONSCIOUS DECISION TO CHOOSE BETWEEN HAMAS AND THE PLO.

18. HAMAS IS THOUGHT TO BE WEAK IN THE COUNTRYSIDE, WHERE THE MB HAS TRADITIONALLY LACKED INFLUENCE AND ORGANIZATION, AND IN THE REFUGEE CAMPS, WHERE SECULAR NATIONALIST MOVEMENTS (FATAH, PFLP, COMMUNISTS, ETC.) REMAIN

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FIRMLY ENTRENCHED. AN INTERESTING EXCEPTION IS NEW ASKAR CAMP WHERE, BECAUSE OF THE ARREST OF ALMOST THE ENTIRE FATAH LEADERSHIP, HAMAS HAS BEEN ABLE TO MOVE IN AND ORGANIZE.

19. IT IS DIFFICULT ACCURATELY TO GAUGE HAMAS' STRENGTH FROM THE SUCCESS OF ITS STRIKE CALLS. HAMAS HAS CHOSEN ITS DAYS WISELY--AUGUST 21 WAS THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE ATTEMPT TO BURN THE AL-AQSA MOSQUE, A TRADITIONAL DAY OF PROTEST, AND SEPTEMBER 9 WAS BOTH A FRIDAY, WHEN MANY SHOPS ARE CLOSED ANYWAY, AND THE BEGINNING OF A NEW MONTH OF THE INTIFADA, AGAIN A TRADITIONAL DAY OF PROTEST. THUS, HAMAS WAS CALLING FOR STRIKES ON DAYS THAT PEOPLE CUSTOMARILY MARK WITH STRIKES AND PROTESTS AND DID NOT ACT AGAINST THE FLOW OF THE INTIFADA.

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HAMAS--RELATIONSHIP WITH ISRAEL

20. MANY WEST BANKERS BELIEVE THAT ISRAEL ACTIVELY SUPPORTS HAMAS IN AN EFFORT TO DIVIDE PALESTINIANS AND WEAKEN THE INTIFADA. THEY POINT TO THE FACT THAT HAMAS OPERATIVES ACT BOLDLY IN DISTRIBUTING THEIR LEAFLETS. SHOPKEEPERS IN JERUSALEM AND NABLUS REPORT THAT, WHEREAS UNLU LEAFLETS ARE DISTRIBUTED SECRETLY FOR FEAR OF ISRAELI SECURITY FORCES, HAMAS OPERATIVES WALK INTO SHOPS AND PRESENT THEIR LEAFLETS DIRECTLY TO THE OWNERS. MAYOR FREIJ OF BETHLEHEM CLAIMS THAT MEMBERS OF SOME WELL KNOWN FAMILIES WHO COLLABORATE WITH ISRAELI OFFICIALS HAVE BEEN SEEN AMONG HAMAS STREET GANGS IN BETHLEHEM. FURTHERMORE, DESPITE MASSIVE ARRESTS--AND THE PUBLIC IDENTITY OF MANY MB LEADERS--RELATIVELY FEW HAMAS LEADERS HAVE BEEN DETAINED. IN RECENT WEEKS, FUNDAMENTALIST LEADERS HAVE GIVEN INTERVIEWS TO ISRAELI PUBLICATIONS THAT WOULD HAVE LANDED SECULARIST LEADERS IN DETENTION. WE BELIEVE THAT, WHILE ISRAELI FORCES MAY BE TURNING A BLIND EYE TO HAMAS ACTIVITIES, THERE IS INSUFFICIENT EVIDENCE TO CONCLUDE THAT ISRAEL IS PROVIDING ACTIVE SUPPORT.

HAMAS--RELATIONSHIP WITH THE INTIFADA LEADERSHIP

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21. HAMAS' FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES, AS SET OUT
IN ITS AUGUST 18 CHARTER (REF B), PUT IT IN
OPPOSITION TO THE SECULAR LEADERSHIP OF THE
INTIFADA. ACCORDING TO THE CHARTER, HAMAS
CONSIDERS ALL OF PALESTINE AN ISLAMIC "WAQF," OR
TRUST FROM GOD. CEDING ANY PART OF IT TO A

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JEWISH STATE WOULD VIOLATE THAT TRUST. HAMAS OPPOSES THE TWO-STATE SOLUTION TOWARD WHICH THE PLO SEEMS TO BE INCHING. IT OPPOSES THE CREATION OF A SECULAR STATE IN PALESTINE, AS CALLED FOR IN THE PLO COVENANT. INSTEAD, IT DEMANDS THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN ISLAMIC STATE. IT ALSO OPPOSES CONVENING AN INTERNATIONAL PEACE CONFERENCE. AS HAMAS LEAFLET NO. 28 SUCCINCTLY PHRASED IT, "NEGOTIATION WITH THE ENEMY IS

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RETREAT AND CAPITULATION." INSTEAD, HAMAS CALLS FOR LIBERATING ALL OF PALESTINE THROUGH JIHAD--BOTH ARMED STRUGGLE AND PROSELYTIZING.

24. THIS HAMAS/UNLU COMPETITION HAS LED TO A BATTLE OF LEAFLETS AND STRIKE CALLS. HAMAS LEAFLETS EXCORIATE THE PLO--PARTICULARLY FATAH--AND THE UNLU FOR CAPITULATING TO THE ZIONIST ENEMY. UNLU, IN RESPONSE, ACCUSES HAMAS OF SERVING ISRAEL BY DIVIDING THE UPRISING. AT THE SAME TIME, UNLU INVITES HAMAS TO JOIN THE INTIFADA LEADERSHIP.

25. HAMAS, TO DATE, HAS REJECTED ALL CALLS FOR UNITY WITH UNLU. ONE EXCUSE OFTEN HEARD IS THAT HAMAS WILL NOT SIT ON THE SAME COMMITTEE WITH THE COMMUNISTS. OTHERS SAY IT WILL NOT SIT WITH ANY LEFTIST GROUP, SUCH AS THE PFLP. OTHER SOURCES, INCLUDING SOME CLOSE TO THE HAMAS LEADERSHIP IN NABLUS, HAVE TOLD US HAMAS HAS AGREED IN PRIVATE TO A TWO-STATE SOLUTION AND WILL SOON JOIN NOT ONLY THE UNLU BUT THE PLO EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AS WELL. ACCORDING TO THESE REPORTS, HAMAS IS MAINTAINING ITS PUBLIC STANCE IN OPPOSITION TO THE UNLU IN ORDER TO STRENGTHEN ITS ORGANIZATION.

24. UNDOUBTEDLY, THERE ARE CONTACTS AND EVEN OCCASIONAL COORDINATION BETWEEN THE TWO GROUPS. HOWEVER, RECONCILIATION AND/OR UNITY BETWEEN THEM SEEMS UNLIKELY AT THIS TIME. HAMAS APPEARS GENUINELY COMMITTED TO THE GOAL OF CREATING AN

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ISLAMIC STATE IN ALL OF PALESTINE. THIS IS A FUNDAMENTAL DIFFERENCE WITH THE SECULAR NATIONALISTS THAT CANNOT BE PAPERED OVER. IT IS THEREFORE LIKELY THAT THE UNLU AND HAMAS WOULD FORGE A PERMANENT ALLIANCE.

25. MOST IMPORTANTLY, HAMAS RETAINS ITS FEAR OF BEING COOPTED INTO THE NATIONALIST MOVEMENT AND BECOMING IRRELEVANT. THIS FEAR WAS ONE OF THE MAIN FACTORS SPURRING THE CREATION OF HAMAS. IT IS IMPROBABLE THAT THE MB WOULD SACRIFICE ITS CREATION NOW, JUST WHEN IT IS GAINING ACCEPTANCE AS A PLAYER. HOWEVER, SHOULD HAMAS FAIL TO MAINTAIN ITS Foothold AND BECOME THREATENED WITH EXTINCTION OR IRRELEVANCE, IT MIGHT AT THAT POINT CONSIDER COOPERATING WITH THE SECULARIST NATIONALIST LEADERSHIP OF THE UNLU FOR TACTICAL REASONS.

HAMAS--PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE

26. GAUGING THE CURRENT STRENGTH OF HAMAS IS A RISKY ENDEAVOR. IN MANY REGIONS OF THE WEST BANK, ISLAMIC INSTITUTIONS ARE HELD IN HIGH REGARD, AND SUPPORT FOR HAMAS APPEARS TO DERIVE MUCH OF ITS STRENGTH FROM THAT TRADITIONAL RESPECT RATHER THAN FROM A CONSCIOUS CHOICE BETWEEN FUNDAMENTALIST AND SECULAR OPTIONS. NEVERTHELESS, HAMAS IS BEING TAKEN INCREASINGLY SERIOUSLY THROUGHOUT THE WEST BANK. WHETHER THAT IS BECAUSE OF ACTUAL STRENGTH AND


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AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY

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E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: PINR, PNAT, PTER, KPAL, IS, JO, EG
SUBJECT: FUNDAMENTALISM AND THE INTIFADA:

INFLUENCE, OR MERELY DUE TO INSPIRED
SELF-PROMOTION, WE CANNOT SAY. IN ANY CASE, IT
IS CLEAR THAT THE HAMAS PHENOMENON WILL BE A
SIGNIFICANT FACTOR IN FUTURE CALCULATIONS.

27. ALTHOUGH ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM WILL REMAIN
A FEATURE OF THE WEST BANK LANDSCAPE, IMPORTANT
FACTORS WORK AGAINST IT BECOMING A PERVASIVE
INFLUENCE OR REPLACING THE SECULARIST STRAIN IN
WEST BANK POLITICS. WEST BANKERS AS A WHOLE ARE
WELL EDUCATED, MUCH TRAVELED, AND CAPITALISTIC
IN ORIENTATION. THEY ARE UNLIKELY WILLINGLY TO
TURN TO THE NARROW ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALIST WORLD
VIEW, NO MATTER HOW DEEP THEIR DISAPPOINTMENT
WITH THE PLO LEADERSHIP.

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28. AS NOTED ABOVE, THE MB HAS HAD ONLY A BRIEF
AND UNDISTINGUISHED HISTORY IN THE WEST BANK.
IN THE CURRENT ENVIRONMENT, THE INTIFADA ENJOYS
VERY WIDESPREAD SUPPORT AMONG WEST BANKERS, WHO
ARE GENERALLY OPPOSED TO ANY EFFORT TO DISRUPT
THIS UNITY AND THREATEN THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF

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THE UPRISING. THUS FAR, PEOPLE HAVE NOT BEEN FORCED TO CHOOSE BETWEEN THE UNLU AND HAMAS, AND SUPPORT FOR THE FUNDAMENTALISTS HAS BEEN RELATIVELY COST FREE. IN A SHOWDOWN BETWEEN THE UNLU AND HAMAS, MUCH OF THAT SUPPORT COULD MELT AWAY.

29. IN ADDITION THE WEST BANK, UNLIKE GAZA, CONTAINS AN IMPORTANT CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY. AS NOTED ABOVE, HAMAS IS MEETING RESISTANCE IN THE CHRISTIAN ENCLAVE OF BETHLEHEM-BEIT JALA-BEIT SAHOUR, EVEN TO THE POINT OF STIMULATING THE REACTIVATION OF A RIVAL CHRISTIAN GROUP. STILL, HAMAS HAS EXTENDED ITS INFLUENCE TO THE LARGELY CHRISTIAN RAMALLAH-EL BIREH AREA, PROVING THAT IT CAN SURVIVE IN A MIXED CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM ENVIRONMENT. THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER OF THESE AREAS IS ALSO SLOWLY BEING DILUTED AS CHRISTIANS EMIGRATE TO FRIENDLIER CLIMES.

30. NONETHELESS, DESPITE THE FACTORS WORKING AGAINST THE SPREAD OF FUNDAMENTALIST INFLUENCE, THERE ARE SITUATIONS IN WHICH FUNDAMENTALIST STRENGTH COULD GROW TO THE POINT THAT HAMAS WOULD BECOME A SPOILER IN ATTEMPTS TO BRING PALESTINIANS AND ISRAELIS TOGETHER. ALTHOUGH WIDESPREAD DECAPITATION THROUGH ARREST OF THE UNLU LEADERSHIP IS NOT LIKELY, GIVEN ITS

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OVERWHELMING POPULAR SUPPORT, ISRAELI EFFORTS TO DO SO TEND TO PROMOTE HAMAS IN SPECIFIC AREAS, SUCH AS IN THE EXAMPLE OF THE NEW ASKAR CAMP GIVEN ABOVE.

31. WEST BANKERS ARE BOTH RELIGIOUS AND NATIONALISTIC. THUS FAR, THEIR POLITICS HAVE FOLLOWED THE NATIONALIST BENT OF THEIR CHARACTER AND CULTURE. THEY HAVE SUPPORTED THE PLO BECAUSE THEY BELIEVE THE PLO IS THE ONLY VIABLE INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNIZED EXPRESSION OF PALESTINIAN NATIONALISM. THEY HAVE THEREFORE CONTINUED TO BACK THE PLO DESPITE MANY DISAPPOINTMENTS, AND THE MAJORITY ARE LIKELY TO CONTINUE TO DO SO. HOWEVER, SHOULD THE PLO FAIL TO OVERCOME ITS IDEOLOGICAL DIVISIONS AND TAKE INITIATIVES THAT WILL LEAD TO A POLITICAL DIALOGUE WITH ISRAEL, THE UNITY OF THE INTIFADA COULD BEGIN TO FRAY ONE CAN IMAGINE A SCENARIO

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IN WHICH PFLP, DFLP, AND COMMUNIST ELEMENTS IN THE TERRITORIES, WHO ARE NOW WORKING WITH FATAH, COULD REVERT TO MORE EXTREME POSITIONS IN THE ABSENCE OF A POLITICAL BREAKTHROUGH. IN SUCH A SITUATION, THE SECULAR-NATIONALIST PRAGMATIC CONSENSUS THAT IS THE DOMINANT FEATURE OF THE INTIFADA COULD CRUMBLE, AND FUNDAMENTALISM COULD MAKE SIGNIFICANT NEW INROADS, ESPECIALLY AMONG DISPOSSESSED GROUPS. THUS, ALTHOUGH A MASS-BASED FUNDAMENTALIST MOVEMENT IS UNLIKELY TO EMERGE, THE FUNDAMENTALISTS COULD TAKE ADVANTAGE OF GROWING DESPAIR AND SECULAR-NATIONALIST DISUNITY TO FURTHER ITS POLICIES OF

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ACTION INR-10

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E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: PINR, PNAT, PTER, KPAL, IS, JO, EG
SUBJECT: FUNDAMENTALISM AND THE INTIFADA:

CONFRONTATION AND REJECTION.

32. DESPITE THE AVOWED ANTI-ISRAELI INTENTIONS OF HAMAS, IT IS LIKELY THAT THE MAIN CONTEST WILL, FOR THE TIME BEING, BE BETWEEN HAMAS AND THE UNLU. THE MB HAS TRADITIONALLY FOCUSED ON ONE MAINSTREAM OPPONENT AT A TIME--THE WAFD IN EGYPT, THE BAATH IN SYRIA. ITS CURRENT OPPONENT IN ITS STRUGGLE FOR THE SOULS OF PALESTINIANS IS THE MAJOR COMPONENT OF THE UNLU, FATAH. UNTIL THIS STRUGGLE IS DECIDED, HAMAS IS UNLIKELY TO DIRECT ITS EFFORTS PRIMARILY AGAINST ISRAEL.

ISLAMIC JIHAD

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[REDACTED]

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33. THIS REPORT HAS FOCUSED PRIMARILY ON HAMAS/MB BOTH BECAUSE HAMAS IS THE MAIN FUNDAMENTALIST GROUP ON THE WEST BANK, AND BECAUSE WE HAVE SO LITTLE INFORMATION ON THE OTHER ISLAMIC PARTIES. ISLAMIC JIHAD, THE ONLY OTHER SUCH GROUP WITH A SIGNIFICANT WEST-BANK FOLLOWING, WAS ESTABLISHED BY ABU JIHAD TO ENHANCE FATAH'S APPEAL WITH RELIGIOUS MUSLIMS. ALTHOUGH IT HAS IN THE PAST CLAIMED INDEPENDENT RESPONSIBILITY FOR ACTS SUCH AS THE OCTOBER 1986 ATTACK AT THE DUNG GATE, IT WAS DECAPITATED WHEN THREE SENIOR LEADERS WERE ASSASSINATED IN CYPRUS. OUR INFORMATION IS THAT ITS CURRENT INFLUENCE ON THE WEST BANK IS MINOR AND THAT IT IS INCAPABLE OF ACTING INDEPENDENTLY OF THE MAINSTREAM FATAH ORGANIZATION ON THE WEST BANK. IT SEEMS TO BE DOING MOST OF ITS ORGANIZING IN WEST BANK PRISONS, WHERE A STRICT QUOTA SYSTEM AMONG GROUPS IS ENFORCED BY THE PRISONERS. WE HAVE NO FIRM INFORMATION ON LINKS BETWEEN ISLAMIC JIHAD ON THE WEST BANK AND IN GAZA, OR WHETHER THE TWO ORGANIZATIONS ARE IN FACT THE SAME.

QUESTIONS

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34. THIS BRIEF OVERVIEW OF ISLAMIC
FUNDAMENTALIST ACTIVITY ON THE WEST BANK DOES
NOT ADDRESS SEVERAL ISSUES OF CONTINUING
IMPORTANCE, SUCH AS KEY FIGURES IN MB/HAMAS AND
ISLAMIC JIHAD; COMMUNICATION BETWEEN HAMAS UNITS
IN VARIOUS REGIONS OF THE WEST BANK, GAZA,

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CAIRO, AND AMMAN; THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
ISLAMIC JIHAD AND HAMAS IN THE WEST BANK AND
GAZA; AND FATAH-HAMAS RELATIONS. WE WILL BE
EXPLORING THESE ISSUES IN FUTURE REPORTING.
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